

Message Text

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44

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SUBJECT: LABOR MINISTER DE CROVO CHARGES COMMUNIST LABOR CONFED-
ERATION WITH TRYING TO OVERTHROW THE LOPEZ GOVERNMENT

REF: A) BOGOTA 11031, DEC 16, 1974; B) BOGOTA 0322

1. LABOR MINISTER MARIA ELENA DE CROVO DENOUNCED THE COMMUNIST-LED
TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION OF COLUMBIAN WORKERS (CSTC) ON JANUARY 10,
1975, FOR TRYING TO TOPPLE THE LOPEZ GOVERNMENT THROUGH ILLEGAL
WORK STOPPAGES. SPEAKING IN MEDELLIN, AT THE INAUGURATION OF ONE
OF A SERIES OF CONFERENCES ON LABOR AND SOCIAL SECURITY
BEING HELD IN VARIOUS CITIES THROUGHOUT COLUMBIA, THE MINISTER SAID,
"THE NEW CONFEDERATION, THE CSTC, HAS BEGUN A PLAN WHOSE PRINCIPAL
OBJECTIVE IS THE OVERTHROW OF THIS POPULAR GOVERNMENT, THROUGH
A CHAIN OF OPENLY ILLEGAL STRIKES". DE CROVO AFFIRMED THAT "WHILE
THE GOC IS ANALYTICAL AND TOLERANT GUARANTEEING RIGHTS TO ALL
CITIZENS, IT WOULD BE WRONG FOR ANYONE TO INTERPRET THE
LIBERALISM IN THE GOVERNMENT AS COWARDISM, ALLOWING THE BREAKING
OF LAWS TO PRECIPITATE AN ABYSS FOR ANARCHY OR DICTATORSHIP".
THE MINISTER CONTRASTED THE ATTITUDE OF CSTC CONFRONTATION WITH
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THE "CONSTRUCTIVE AND PROUD ACTIONS OF THE UNION OF COLUMBIAN

WORKERS (UTC) AND THE COLUMBIAN WORKERS CONFERENCE (CTC)".

2. VICE-MINISTER OF LABOR LIBORIO CHICA HINCAPIE FOLLOWED THE MINISTER'S LEAD, ANNOUNCING THAT THE PLAN TO OVERTHROW THE COPEZ GOVERNMENT, CALLED THE MARCH PLAN, "IS A THREE-MONTH PLAN OF STRIKES ENDING IN MARCH". HE WARNED THAT THOSE FOMENTING THE POTENTIAL CRISIS ANTICIPATED A DICTATORSHIP OF THE LEFT, BUT THAT COLUMBIA WOULD MORE LIKELY "GO THE OTHER DIRECTION, WHICH WOULD MEAN WE WOULD ALL LOSE OUR HEADS". CHICA CHALLENGED THE THREE MILLION COLOBIANS WHO VOTED FOR LOPEZ AND HIS "CLEAR MANDATE" TO DO MORE TO SUPPORT HIM.

3. THE UTC AND THE CTC SUBSEQUENTLY ISSUED STATEMENTS SUPPORTING THE MINISTER AND DENOUNCING COMMUNISTS GENERALLY, WHILE THE CSTC DEFENDED ITSELF AS THE ONLY REAL SPOKESMAN FOR THE COLUMBIA MASSES.

4. COINCIDENTALLY, FORMER PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS RESTREPO, IN THE LATEST NUEVA FRONTERA, PRAISED MINISTER DE CROVO AS "THE STRONGEST, PERHAPS THE ONLY STRONG POLITICAL FIGURE IN THE GOC, OUTSIDE OF PRESIDENT LOPEZ".

5. COMMENT: WHILE THE MINISTER IS THE "STRONGEST" MEMBER OF THE LOPEZ TEAM, HER REMARKS PROBABLY REFLECT MORE ANXIETY THAN STRENGTH CAUSED BY HER FAILURE TO FIND A WORKABLE FORMULA FOR DEALING WITH THE COMMUNIST LABOR ORGANIZATIONS. EARLY LOPEZ RECOGNITION OF THE CSTC WAS FOLLOWED BY THAT ORGANIZATION'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE NATIONAL SALARY COUNCIL. THE RECENT BANCO POPULAR EMPLOYEES STRIKE (REF A) THE CURRENT BANCO GANADERO WORKERS STRIKE (REF B) BOTH COMMUNIST-LED STOPPAGES, HAVE INCLUDED INVECTIVES ON THE PART OF THE UNION LEADERS AGAINST THE MINISTER AND THE LOPEZ GOVERNMENT GENERALLY. VERBAL EXCHANGES ARE BOUND TO INCREASE DURING THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS AS LABOR TURMOIL INCREASES, MUCH OF IT LED BY COMMUNISTS AND POLITICALLY INSPIRED. THE GOC MAY ALSO REVERT TO THE PREVIOUSLY COMMON PRACTICE OF USING RIOT POLICE TO CONTROL STRIKES.

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